17: Pumphrey G-5 (1934-1938) 1941
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

APPENDIX V.

The Character of the Shilluk and some of their Conventions.

The most striking Shilluk characteristic is pride of race, from which most other features of their character spring. Their intense conservatism, for example, results from a conviction that everything not Shilluk in origin is inevitably bad. Their much complained of insolence results from their belief that they are every bit as good as the foreigner and just a little better because he has that great initial handicap of not being a Shilluk. It is remarkable that so few Shilluk can understand Arabic considering that no Shilluk village is more than thirty miles from either Tonga, Malakal, Kodok or Kaka, where Arabic is spoken and that from early times their contact with the north has been incessant if not always of the happiest. The *Reth's* chief policeman, an intelligent man who acts as his agent in Malakal and is constantly in attendance at the office, can speak no Arabic.

Nor is the cause simply lack of intelligence and adaptability. When a Shilluk leaves the tribe and becomes, for example, a Medical Assistant in Malakal or Tonga he dresses in western fashion because otherwise he would be laughed at. Likewise in such circumstances his children will wear seamed garments like the children of the townspeople. But as soon as he goes back to his village, whether on leave or retirement, he at once resumes the traditional tribal dress. Those who have had an opportunity to compare their intelligence with that of the Dinka, Nuer and northern Sudanese say that they are slightly more intelligent than the Nuer or the Dinka and about equal in ability to the Northerner. Certainly the Shilluk who know the English language speak it well, and it cannot be said that they are bad linguists in face of such examples as that of a notorious *Kwanyirak* of medical connexion who speaks English, Arabic, Dinka, Nuer and Anuak with great fluency and gets along adequately in Murle. Pure conservatism and the fact that all local merchants speak Shilluk accounts for the almost non-existent progress made by the Arabic language in a century of contact.

Disobedience, insubordination and insolence are according to many the chief Shilluk vices. The first two, although no doubt very